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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1149
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1920
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6771
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5077
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0248
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1066
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2561
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0998
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 4631
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 1327
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000608

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TAGS: [AF](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PREF](#)

SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER ON PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS:
INVITING AFGHAN JIRGA COMMISSION TO VISIT, URGING REFUGEES
TO GO HOME

REF: ISLAMABAD 68

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (U) This cable contains an action request; please see para. 5.

[¶](#)2. (C) Introduction: In a February 5 meeting, Interior Minister and Chairman of Pakistan's Jirga Commission Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao told the Ambassador that he has extended an invitation to Afghanistan's jirga planning commission to visit Pakistan in February to begin discussion of jirga logistics. Sherpao, who views Pakistan's Jirga Commission as a vehicle to improve bilateral relations across the board, said that he has already initiated preliminary discussions with Syed Pir Ahmed Gilani, the Chairman of Afghanistan's Jirga Commission. As Gilani and Sherpao are already well acquainted, their leadership of the respective jirga planning commissions bodes well for their efforts. The Minister also commented on the meeting of the refugee Tripartite Commission (scheduled on February 6 in Lahore), saying that Pakistan's representatives will press for closure of 4-5 refugee camps in the coming year. President Musharraf's determination to move forward with the camp closures has been made equally clear to the Chief Ministers and other officials of the two affected provinces. End introduction.

[¶](#)3. (C) Pakistan's five-member Jirga Commission met February 3 to consider its outline for jirgas in the Pashtun lands along the PAK-AFG border. Sunday's press carried stories that the Commission had decided to extend an invitation to its Afghan counterparts to visit Islamabad this month to initiate bilateral discussions on jirga logistics and themes. Minister Sherpao confirmed the Commission's invitation to the Ambassador, saying that he had first broached the idea of a February meeting with Afghan Chairman Pir Gilani in

mid-January, when Gilani traveled to Islamabad to attend wedding festivities for Sherpao's son. Sherpao said that he will call Pir Gilani personally to convey the Commission's official invitation to the Afghan Jirga Commission.

¶4. (C) Sherpao advised the Ambassador that he expects the Jirga Commission to take on a role beyond the confines of jirga planning; he sees it as an instrument for expanding and deepening the bilateral relationship. Commenting on the important signal Presidents Karzai and Musharraf have sent by appointing such respected leaders as their Commission chairmen, the Ambassador agreed that the Commissions' meeting could provide a useful forum for building bilateral relationships and confidence. Noting that he has heard that the Afghans hoped to hold their first jirga this month, Sherpao indicated that much remains to be done before a jirga can be convened. We are not seeking to delay, Sherpao said, we just want to be sure that we get it right.

¶5. (C) Action Request: We are fortunate that those tasked with coordinating successful PAK-AFG jirgas are not only men who enjoy their Presidents' confidence, but are also old acquaintances who can build upon a pre-existing relationship of respect and high regard. Post urges Department and Embassy Kabul to encourage the Afghan Jirga Commission to accept the Pakistani invitation to initiate these bilateral discussions.

¶6. (C) The Minister reviewed preparations in anticipation of the February 6 meeting of the PAK-AFG-UNHCR refugee Tripartite Commission in Lahore. Pakistan's representatives

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will present plans to close 4-5 problem refugee camps in the coming year (Pir Alizai, Jalozei, Ghirdi Jungle, Jungle Kacha Ghari and Mohammad Kheil). The President's determination to close these camps and repatriate (not relocate) the residents was reinforced for the Chief Ministers of North West Frontier Province and Balochistan while they were in Islamabad over the weekend for the Jirga Commission meeting. Sherpao intends to convene the provinces' top civil service officials (the chief secretaries and home secretaries) to deliver the same message. The Minister expressed his personal relief that his former Additional Director General in the Federal Investigation Agency, Tariq Khosa, is now the chief provincial police official in Balochistan: "he's the right man to take on this job," the Minister said (Ref A). The Ambassador stressed that senior policy-level guidance would be necessary to ensure that the Tripartite Commission process has the necessary force of vision and outright muscle to make the camp closures a reality, noting that the U.S. and other international donors are ready to support the repatriation effort, but need Pakistan to present a concrete plan.

¶7. (U) Post has previewed this cable with Embassy Kabul.
CROCKER